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Reading Response 4

So far as my understanding of the United States of Paranoia, retrospective view of the conspiracies that existed many years ago were ridiculous by today’s standards, some of which were intended to be satirical and are meant to be rhetorical but were taken at face value. It goes to show that people are hungry for explanations regarding certain events and exaggerated variations of the stories told by the conspiracy theories. They find everything that the media says to be something to be dissected or are somehow connected to previous phenomena.

In the *Operation Mindfuck* chapter of the book, he introduced the *ironic style* of writing conspiracy theories. "In the ironic style, the most interesting thing about a conspiracy theory isn’t that it might or might not be true; it’s that it constructs a story out of the everyday truths we only hazily perceive." (p. 221). Conspiracies that propagate through history have had so many variations and twists as it turns another hand. But I find the most effective one and convincing of all is the *ironic style*. It doesn't matter whether a story is factual or pure hoax, but how people receive such stories determine its “truthiness”, exacerbated by the current paranoia around such issues or events. This demonstrates how malleable people are and ready to jump onto anything that contains some truthful elements that people are familiar with. As familiarity is sometimes confused with the truth.

"Krassner had simply assumed that everyone would be able to tell the satiric from the sincere. When it turned out that many readers found that difficult, he didn't look for ways to clear up the confusion; he looked for ways to have fun with it" (pp. 227-228). As skilled as the writers mentioned by Jesse Walker from the book, they are as much as responsible for prolonging the paranoia as their uninformed gullible readers, even if the contents were intended to convey an ideology more than to tell the truth.

With all the conspiracies mentioned so far in the book, I understand that Walker is trying to reveal, or rather to inform readers of the origin of some conspiracies, how it changes overtime, and why conspiracies propagate and cause paranoia. However, I noticed a weakness in some of his arguments that focused more on the perspective of conspirators more so than the receiving end, or the masses. It is interesting to know more about some of the deep conspiracies that only some people knew about and its appeal to people, but I also think it is important to be informed of the scope of which these conspiracy theories, however sincere or satirical, affect the American people, psychologically and statistically. As influences and numbers can also prove the existence of paranoia during those times.

Works Cited

Walker, Jesse. *The United States of Paranoia*. Harper. Kindle Edition.